



## Words of John Brown.

FROM HIS ACCOUNT OF HIS CHILDHOOD.

During the war with England a circumstance occurred that in the end made him a most *determined Abolitionist*: & led him to declare, or *Swear*: *Eternal war* with Slavery. He was staying for a short time with a very gentlemanly landlord since a United States Marshall who held a slave boy near his own age very active, intelligent and good feeling; and to whom John was under considerable obligation for numerous little acts of kindness. *The master* made a great pet of John: brought him to table with his first company; & friends; called their attention to every little smart thing he *said or did*: & to the fact of his being more than a hundred miles from home with a company of cattle alone; while the *negro boy* (who was fully if not more than his equal) was badly clothed, poorly fed; *and lodged in cold weather*; & beaten before his eyes with Iron Shovels or any other thing that came first to hand. This brought John to reflect on the wretched, hopeless condition, of *Fatherless & Motherless slave children*: for such children have neither Fathers or Mothers to protect, & provide for them. He sometimes would raise the question *is God their Father?*

JOHN BROWN'S READING AND FAMILY WORSHIP, AS DESCRIBED  
BY HIS DAUGHTER.

My dear father's favorite books, of a historical character, were "Rollin's Ancient History," Josephus, Plutarch, "Napoleon and his Marshals," and the Life of Oliver Cromwell. Of religious books, Baxter's "Saints' Rest" (in speaking of which

at one time he said he could not see how any person could read it through carefully without becoming a Christian), the "Pilgrim's Progress," and Henry "On Weakness." But above all others, the Bible was his favorite volume; and he had such a perfect knowledge of it, that when any person was reading it, he would correct the least mistake. His favorite passages were these, as near as I can remember:—

"Remember them that are in bonds as bound with them."

"Whoso stoppeth his ear at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard."

"He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed; for he giveth his bread to the poor."

"A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favor rather than silver or gold."

"Whoso mocketh the poor, reproacheth his Maker; and he that is glad at calamities, shall not be unpunished."

"He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth to the Lord, and that which he hath given will He pay to him again."

"Give to him that asketh of thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away."

"A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast; but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel."

"Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it."

"Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it; except the Lord keepeth the city, the watchman walketh in vain."

"I hate vain thoughts, but thy law do I love."

The last chapter of Ecclesiastes was a favorite one, and on Fast-days and Thanksgivings he used very often to read the fifty-eighth chapter of Isaiah.

When he would come home at night, tired out with labor, he would, before going to bed, ask some of the family to read chapters (as was his usual course night and morning); and would almost always say, "Read one of David's Psalms."

His favorite hymns (Watts's) were these: "Blow ye the trumpet, blow!" "Sweet is Thy word, my God, my King!" "I'll praise my Maker with my breath"; "Oh, happy is the man who hears!" "Why should we start, and fear to die!" "With songs and honors sounding loud"; "Ah, lovely appearance of death!"

## AN EARLY LETTER ON SLAVERY.

*John Brown to his Brother Frederick.*

RANDOLPH, PA., Nov. 21, 1834.

*Dear Brother,*—As I have had only one letter from Hudson since you left here, and that some weeks since, I begin to get uneasy and apprehensive that all is not well. I had satisfied my mind about it for some time, in expectation of seeing father here, but I begin to give that up for the present. Since you left me I have been trying to devise some means whereby I might do something in a practical way for my poor fellow-men who are in bondage, and having fully consulted the feelings of my wife and my three boys, we have agreed to get at least one negro boy or youth, and bring him up as we do our own,—viz., give him a good English education, learn him what we can about the history of the world, about business, about general subjects, and, above all, try to teach him the fear of God. We think of three ways to obtain one: First, to try to get some Christian slaveholder to release one to us. Second, to get a free one if no one will let us have one that is a slave. Third, if that does not succeed, we have all agreed to submit to considerable privation in order to buy one. This we are now using means in order to effect, in the confident expectation that God is about to bring them all out of the house of bondage.

I will just mention that when this subject was first introduced, Jason had gone to bed; but no sooner did he hear the thing hinted, than his warm heart kindled, and he turned out to have a part in the discussion of a subject of such exceeding interest. I have for years been trying to devise some way to get a school a-going here for blacks, and I think that on many accounts it would be a most favorable location. Children here would have no intercourse with vicious people of their own kind, nor with openly vicious persons of any kind. There would be no powerful opposition influence against such a thing; and should there be any, I believe the settlement might be so effected in future as to have almost the whole influence of the place in favor of such a school. Write me how you would like to join me, and try to get on from Hudson and thereabouts some first-rate abolitionist families with you. I do honestly believe that our united exertions alone might soon, with the good hand of our God upon us, effect it all.

This has been with me a favorite theme of reflection for years. I think that a place which might be in some measure settled with a view to such an object would be much more favorable to such an undertaking than would any such place as Hudson, with all its conflicting interests and feelings; and I do think such advantages ought to be afforded the young blacks, whether they are all to be immediately set free or not. Perhaps we might, under God, in that way do more towards breaking their yoke effectually than in any other. If the young blacks of our country could once become enlightened, it would most assuredly operate on slavery like firing powder confined in rock, and all slaveholders know it well. Witness their heaven-daring laws against teaching blacks. If once the Christians in the free States would set to work in earnest in teaching the blacks, the people of the slaveholding States would find themselves constitutionally driven to set about the work of emancipation immediately. The laws of this State are now such that the inhabitants of any township may raise by a tax in aid of the State school-fund any amount of money they may choose by a vote, for the purpose of common schools, which any child may have access to by application. If you will join me in this undertaking, I will make with you any arrangement of our temporal concerns that shall be fair. Our health is good, and our prospects about business rather brightening.

Affectionately yours,

JOHN BROWN.

INSTRUCTIONS TO HIS SPRINGFIELD, MASS., "GILEADITES,"  
AN ORGANIZATION OF COLORED PEOPLE.

WORDS OF ADVICE.

*Branch of the United States League of Gileadites. Adopted Jan. 15, 1851, as written and recommended by John Brown.*

"UNION IS STRENGTH."

Nothing so charms the American people as personal bravery. Witness the case of Cinques, of everlasting memory, on board the "Amistad." The trial for life of one bold and to some extent successful man, for defending his rights in good earnest, would arouse more sympathy throughout the nation than the

accumulated wrongs and sufferings of more than three millions of our submissive colored population. We need not mention the Greeks struggling against the oppressive Turks, the Poles against Russia, nor the Hungarians against Austria and Russia combined, to prove this. *No jury can be found in the Northern States that would convict a man for defending his rights to the last extremity. This is well understood by Southern Congressmen, who insisted that the right of trial by jury should not be granted to the fugitive.* Colored people have ten times the number of fast friends among the whites than they suppose, and would have ten times the number they now have were they but half as much in earnest to secure their dearest rights as they are to ape the follies and extravagances of their white neighbors, and to indulge in idle show, in ease, and in luxury. Just think of the money expended by individuals in your behalf in the past twenty years! Think of the number who have been mobbed and imprisoned on your account! Have any of you seen the Branded Hand? Do you remember the names of Lovejoy and Torrey?

Should one of your number be arrested, you must collect together as quickly as possible, so as to outnumber your adversaries who are taking an active part against you. Let no able-bodied man appear on the ground unequipped, or with his weapons exposed to view: let that be understood beforehand. Your plans must be known only to yourself, and with the understanding that all traitors must die, wherever caught and proven to be guilty. "Whosoever is fearful or afraid, let him return and depart early from Mount Gilead" (Judges vii. 3; Deut. xx. 8). Give all cowards an opportunity to show it on condition of holding their peace. *Do not delay one moment after you are ready: you will lose all your resolution if you do. Let the first blow be the signal for all to engage; and when engaged do not do your work by halves, but make clean work with your enemies,—and be sure you meddle not with any others.* By going about your business quietly, you will get the job disposed of before the number that an uproar would bring together can collect; and you will have the advantage of those who come out against you, for they will be wholly unprepared with either equipments or matured plans; all with them will be confusion and terror. Your enemies will be slow to attack you after you have done up the work nicely; and if they should, they will have to encounter your white friends as well as you; for you

may safely calculate on a division of the whites, and may by that means get to an honorable parley.

Be firm, determined, and cool; but let it be understood that you are not to be driven to desperation without making it an awful dear job to others as well as to you. Give them to know distinctly that those who live in wooden houses should not throw fire, and that you are just as able to suffer as your white neighbors. *After effecting a rescue, if you are assailed, go into the houses of your most prominent and influential white friends with your wives; and that will effectually fasten upon them the suspicion of being connected with you, and will compel them to make a common cause with you, whether they would otherwise live up to their profession or not. This would leave them no choice in the matter.* Some would doubtless prove themselves true of their own choice; others would flinch. That would be taking them at their own words. You may make a tumult in the courtroom where a trial is going on, by burning gunpowder freely in paper packages, if you cannot think of any better way to create a momentary alarm, and might possibly give one or more of your enemies a hoist. But in such case the prisoner will need to take the hint at once, and bestir himself; and so should his friends improve the opportunity for a general rush.

A lasso might possibly be applied to a slave-catcher for once with good effect. Hold on to your weapons, and never be persuaded to leave them, part with them, or have them far away from you. *Stand by one another and by your friends, while a drop of blood remains; and be hanged, if you must, but tell no tales out of school. Make no confession.*

Union is strength. Without some well-digested arrangements nothing to any good purpose is likely to be done, let the demand be never so great. Witness the case of Hamlet and Long in New York, when there was no well-defined plan of operations or suitable preparation beforehand.

The desired end may be effectually secured by the means proposed; namely, the enjoyment of our inalienable rights.

## THE FIGHT OF OSAWATOMIE.

*Published in the Newspapers at the Time.*

Early in the morning of the 30th of August the enemy's scouts approached to within one mile and a half of the western boundary of the town of Osawatomie. At this place my son

Frederick (who was not attached to my force) had lodged, with some four other young men from Lawrence, and a young man named Garrison, from Middle Creek. The scouts, led by a proslavery preacher named White, shot my son dead in the road, while he — as I have since ascertained — supposed them to be friendly. At the same time they butchered Mr Garrison, and badly mangled one of the young men from Lawrence, who came with my son, leaving him for dead. This was not far from sunrise. I had stopped during the night about two and one-half miles from them, and nearly one mile from Osawatomie. I had no organized force, but only some twelve or fifteen new recruits, who were ordered to leave their preparations for breakfast and follow me into the town, as soon as this news was brought to me.

As I had no means of learning correctly the force of the enemy, I placed twelve of the recruits in a log-house, hoping we might be able to defend the town. I then gathered some fifteen more men together, whom we armed with guns; and we started in the direction of the enemy. After going a few rods, we could see them approaching the town in line of battle, about half a mile off, upon a hill west of the village. I then gave up all idea of doing more than to annoy, from the timber near the town, into which we were all retreated, and which was filled with a thick growth of underbrush; but I had no time to recall the twelve men in the log-house, and so lost their assistance in the fight. At the point above named I met with Captain Cline, a very active young man, who had with him some twelve or fifteen mounted men, and persuaded him to go with us into the timber, on the southern shore of the Osage, or Marais des Cygnes, a little to the north-west from the village. Here the men, numbering not more than thirty in all, were directed to scatter and secrete themselves as well as they could, and await the approach of the enemy. This was done in full view of them (who must have seen the whole movement), and had to be done in the utmost haste. I believe Captain Cline and some of his men were not even dismounted in the fight, but cannot assert positively. When the left wing of the enemy had approached to within common rifle-shot, we commenced firing, and very soon threw the northern branch of the enemy's line into disorder. This continued some fifteen or twenty minutes, which gave us an uncommon opportunity to annoy them. Captain Cline and his men soon got out of ammunition, and retired across the river.

After the enemy rallied, we kept up our fire, until, by the leaving of one and another, we had but six or seven left. We then retired across the river. We had one man killed—a Mr. Powers, from Captain Cline's company—in the fight. One of my men, a Mr. Partridge, was shot in crossing the river. Two or three of the party who took part in the fight are yet missing, and may be lost or taken prisoners. Two were wounded; namely, Dr. Updegraff and a Mr. Collis. I cannot speak in too high terms of them, and of many others I have not now time to mention.

One of my best men, together with myself, was struck by a partially spent ball from the enemy, in the commencement of the fight, but we were only bruised. The loss I refer to is one of my missing men. The loss of the enemy, as we learn by the different statements of our own as well as their people, was some thirty one or two killed, and from forty to fifty wounded. After burning the town to ashes and killing a Mr. Williams they had taken, whom neither party claimed, they took a hasty leave, carrying their dead and wounded with them. They did not attempt to cross the river, nor to search for us, and have not since returned to look over their work.

I give this in great haste, in the midst of constant interruptions. My second son was with me in the fight, and escaped unharmed. This I mention for the benefit of his friends. Old Preacher White, I hear, boasts of having killed my son. Of course he is a lion.

JOHN BROWN,

LAWRENCE, KANSAS, Sept. 7, 1856.

# STATEMENT OF HIS VIRGINIA PLAN TO FREDERICK DOUGLASS IN 1847.

*From Douglass's "Life and Times."*

Captain Brown cautiously approached the subject which he wished to bring to my attention, for he seemed to apprehend opposition to his views. He denounced slavery in look and language fierce and bitter; thought that slaveholders had forfeited their right to live, and that the slaves had the right to gain their liberty in any way they could; did not believe that "moral suasion" would ever liberate the slave, nor that political action would abolish the system. He had long had a plan which could accomplish this end; and had invited me to his



house to lay that plan before me; he had been some time looking for colored men to whom he could safely reveal his secret, and at times he had almost despaired of finding such men; but now he was encouraged, for he saw heads of such rising up in all directions. He had observed my course, at home and abroad, and he wanted my co-operation. His plan, as it then lay in his mind, had much to commend it. It did not, as some suppose, contemplate a general rising among the slaves, and a general slaughter of the slavemasters: an insurrection, he thought, would only defeat the object; but his plan did contemplate the creating of an armed force which should act in the very heart of the South. He was not averse to the shedding of blood, and thought the practice of carrying arms would be a good one for the colored people to adopt, as it would give them a sense of their manhood. No people, he said, could have self-respect, or be respected, who would not fight for their freedom. He called my attention to a map of the United States, and pointed out to me the ranges which stretch away from the borders of New York into the Southern States. "These mountains," he said, "are the basis of my plan. God has given the strength of the hills to freedom; they were placed here for the emancipation of the negro race; they are full of natural forts, where one man for defence will be equal to a hundred for attack; they are full also of good hiding-places, where large numbers of brave men could be concealed, and baffle and elude pursuit for a long time. I know these mountains well, and could take a body of men into them and keep them there, despite of all the efforts of Virginia to dislodge them. The true object to be sought is, first of all, to destroy the money-value of slave property; and that can only be done by rendering such property insecure. My plan, then, is to take at first about twenty-five picked men, and begin on a small scale; supply them arms and ammunition, and post them in squads of five on a line of twenty-five miles. The most persuasive and judicious of them shall then go down to the fields from time to time, as opportunity offers, and induce the slaves to join them, seeking and selecting the most restless and daring."

He saw that in this part of the work the utmost care must be used to avoid treachery and disclosure. Only the most conscientious and skilled should be sent on this perilous duty; with care and enterprise he thought he could soon gather a force of a hundred hardy men, who would be content to lead

the free and adventurous life to which he proposed to train them. When these were properly drilled, and each man had found the place for which he was best suited, they would begin work in earnest; they would run off the slaves in large numbers, retain the brave and strong ones in the mountains, and send the weak and timid to the North by the "underground railroad"; his operations would be enlarged with increasing numbers, and would not be confined to one locality.

When I asked him how he would support these men, he said emphatically he would subsist them upon the enemy. Slavery was a state of war, and the slave had a right to anything necessary to his freedom. "But," said I, "suppose you succeed in running off a few slaves, and thus impress the Virginia slaveholders with a sense of insecurity in their slaves,—the effect will only be to make them sell their slaves farther South." "That," said he, "will be first what I want to do; then I would follow them up. If we could drive slavery out of one county, it would be a great gain; it would weaken the system throughout the State." "But they would employ bloodhounds to hunt you out of the mountains." "That they might attempt," said he, "but the chances are we should whip them; and when we should have whipped one squad, they would be careful how they pursued." "But you might be surrounded and cut off from your means of subsistence." He thought that could not be done so they could not cut their way out; but even if the worst came, he could but be killed, and he had no better use for his life than to lay it down in the cause of the slave. When I suggested that we might convert the slaveholders, he became much excited, and said that could never be; "he knew their proud hearts, and that they would never be induced to give up their slaves until they felt a big stick about their heads." He thought I might have noticed the simple manner in which he lived, adding that he had adopted this in order to save money to carry out his purposes. This was said in no boastful tone, for he felt that he had delayed already too long, and had no room to boast either his zeal or his self-denial. Had some men made such display of rigid virtue, I should have rejected it as affected, false, or hypocritical, but in John Brown I felt it to be as real as iron or granite. From this night spent with John Brown in 1847, while I continued to write and speak against slavery, I became all the less hopeful of its peaceful abolition. My utterances became more and more tinged by the color of this man's strong impressions.

## BROWN'S PLAN AS EXPLAINED IN CANADA IN 1838.

*Richard Realf's Report.*

John Brown stated that for twenty or thirty years the idea had possessed him like a passion of giving liberty to the slaves; that he made a journey to England, during which he made a tour upon the European continent, inspecting all fortifications, and especially all earthwork forts which he could find, with a view of applying the knowledge thus gained, with modifications and inventions of his own, to a mountain warfare in the United States. He stated that he had read all the books upon insurrectionary warfare that he could lay his hands on: the Roman warfare, the successful opposition of the Spanish chieftains during the period when Spain was a Roman province,—how with ten thousand men, divided and subdivided into small companies, acting simultaneously yet separately, they withstood the whole consolidated power of the Roman Empire through a number of years. In addition to this, he had become very familiar with the successful warfare waged by Schamyl, the Circassian chief, against the Russians; he had posted himself in relation to the war of Toussaint L'Ouverture; he had become thoroughly acquainted with the wars in Hayti and the islands round about; and from all these things he had drawn the conclusion,—believing, as he stated there he did believe, and as we all (if I may judge from myself) believed,—that upon the first intimation of a plan formed for the liberation of the slaves, they would immediately rise all over the Southern States. He supposed that they would come into the mountains to join him, where he purposed to work, and that by flocking to his standard they would enable him (making the line of mountains which cuts diagonally through Maryland and Virginia, down through the Southern States into Tennessee and Alabama, the base of his operations) to act upon the plantations on the plains lying on each side of that range of mountains; that we should be able to establish ourselves in the fastnesses. And if any hostile action were taken against us, either by the militia of the States or by the armies of the United States, we purposed to defeat first the militia, and next, if possible, the troops of the United States; and then organize the free blacks under the provisional constitution, which would carve out for the locality of its jurisdiction all that mountainous region in which the blacks were to be established, in which

they were to be taught the useful and mechanical arts, and all the business of life. Schools were also to be established, and so on. The negroes were to be his soldiers.

## PROVISIONAL CONSTITUTION AND ORDINANCES FOR THE PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES.

[This is the preamble of the constitution drawn up by Brown in 1858 for the government of the slaves whom he proposed to free.]

### *Preamble.*

*Whereas* slavery, throughout its entire existence in the United States, is none other than a most barbarous, unprovoked, and unjustifiable war of one portion of its citizens upon another portion—the only conditions of which are perpetual imprisonment and hopeless servitude or absolute extermination—in utter disregard and violation of those eternal and self-evident truths set forth in our Declaration of Independence:

*Therefore*, we, citizens of the United States, and the oppressed people who by a recent decision of the Supreme Court are declared to have no rights which the white man is bound to respect, together with all other people degraded by the laws thereof, do, for the time being, ordain and establish for ourselves the following Provisional Constitution and Ordinances, the better to protect our persons, property, lives, and liberties, and to govern our actions:

### OLD BROWN'S FAREWELL

*To the Plymouth Rocks, Bunker Hill Monuments, Charter Oaks,  
and Uncle Tom's Cabins.*

He has left for Kansas; has been trying since he came out of the Territory to secure an outfit, or, in other words, the means of arming and thoroughly equipping his regular minute-men, who are mixed up with the people of Kansas. And he leaves the States with a feeling of deepest sadness, that after having exhausted his own small means, and with his family and his brave men suffered hunger, cold, nakedness, and some of them sickness, wounds, imprisonment in irons, with extreme cruel treatment, and others death; that after lying on the

ground for months in the most sickly, unwholesome, and uncomfortable places, some of the time with sick and wounded, destitute of any shelter, hunted like wolves, and sustained in part by Indians; that after all this, in order to sustain a cause which every citizen of this "glorious republic" is under equal moral obligation to do, and for the neglect of which he will be held accountable by God,—a cause in which every man, woman, and child of the entire human family has a deep and awful interest,—that when no wages are asked or expected, he cannot secure, amid all the wealth, luxury, and extravagance of this "heaven-exalted" people, even the necessary supplies of the common soldier. "How are the mighty fallen!"

I am destitute of horses, baggage-wagons, tents, harness, saddles, bridles, holsters, spurs, and belts; camp equipage, such as cooking and eating utensils, blankets, knapsacks, intrenching-tools, axes, shovels, spades, mattocks, crowbars; have not a supply of ammunition; have not money sufficient to pay freight and travelling expenses; and left my family poorly supplied with common necessities.

BOSTON, April, 1857.

JOHN BROWN TO F. B. SANBORN.

PETERBORO, N.Y., Feb. 24, 1858.

*My dear Friend,*—Mr. Morton has taken the liberty of saying to me that you felt half inclined to make a common cause with me. I greatly rejoice at this; for I believe when you come to look at the ample field I labor in, and the rich harvest which not only this entire country, but the whole world during the present and future generations may reap from its successful cultivation, you will feel that you are out of your element until you find you are in it, an entire unit. What an inconceivable amount of good you might so effect by your counsel, your example, your encouragement, your natural and acquired ability for active service! And, then, how very little we can possibly lose! Certainly the cause is enough to *live* for, if not to——for. I have only had this one opportunity, in a life of nearly sixty years; and could I be continued ten times as long again, I might not again have another equal opportunity. God has honored but comparatively a very small part of mankind with any possible chance for such mighty and soul-

satisfying rewards. But, my dear friend, if you should make up your mind to do so, I trust it will be wholly from the promptings of your own spirit, after having thoroughly counted the cost. I would flatter no man into such a measure, if I could do it ever so easily.

I expect nothing but to "endure hardness"; but I expect to effect a mighty conquest, even though it be like the last victory of Samson. I felt for a number of years, in earlier life, a steady, strong desire to die; but since I saw any prospect of becoming a "reaper" in the great harvest, I have not only felt quite willing to live, but have enjoyed life much; and am now rather anxious to live for a few years more.

Your sincere friend,

JOHN BROWN.

#### JOHN BROWN TO THEODORE PARKER.

BOSTON, MASS., March 7, 1858.

*My dear Sir,*— Since you know I have an almost countless brood of poor hungry chickens to "scratch for," you will not reproach me for scratching even on the Sabbath. At any rate, I trust God will not. I want you to undertake to provide a substitute for an address you saw last season, directed to the officers and soldiers of the United States Army. The idea contained in that address I of course like, for I furnished the skeleton. I never had the ability to clothe those ideas in language at all to satisfy myself; and I was by no means satisfied with the style of that address, and do not know as I can give any correct idea of what I want. I will, however, try.

In the first place it must be short, or it will not be generally read. It must be in the simplest or plainest language, without the least affectation of the scholar about it, and yet be worded with great clearness and power. The anonymous writer must (in the language of the Paddy) be "afther others," and not "afther himself at all, at all." If the spirit that communicated Franklin's Poor Richard (or some other good spirit) would dictate, I think it would be quite as well employed as the "dear sister spirits" have been for some years past. The address should be appropriate, and particularly adapted to the peculiar circumstances we anticipate, and should look to the actual change of service from that of Satan to the service

of God. It should be, in short, a most earnest and powerful appeal to men's sense of right and to their feelings of humanity. Soldiers are men, and no man can certainly calculate the value and importance of getting a single "nail into old Captain Kidd's chest." It should be provided beforehand, and be ready in advance to distribute by all persons, male and female, who may be disposed to favor the right.

I also want a similar short address, appropriate to the peculiar circumstances, intended for all persons, old and young, male and female, slaveholding and non-slaveholding, to be sent out broadcast over the entire nation. So by every male and female prisoner on being set at liberty, and to be read by them during confinement. I know that men will listen, and reflect, too, under such circumstances. Persons will hear your anti-slavery lectures and abolition lectures when they have become virtually slaves themselves. The impressions made on prisoners by kindness and plain dealing, instead of barbarous and cruel treatment, such as they might give, and instead of being slaughtered like wild reptiles, as they might very naturally expect, are not only powerful, but lasting. Females are susceptible of being carried away entirely by the kindness of an intrepid and magnanimous soldier, even when his bare name was but a terror the day previous. Now, dear sir, I have told you about as well as I know how what I am anxious at once to secure. Will you write the tracts, or get them written, so that I may commence colporteur?

Very respectfully your friend,

JOHN BROWN.

#### BROWN'S WORDS TO GOVERNOR WISE AT HARPER'S FERRY.

Governor, I have from all appearances not more than fifteen or twenty years the start of you in the journey to that eternity of which you kindly warn me; and, whether my time here shall be fifteen months or fifteen days or fifteen hours, I am equally prepared to go. There is an eternity behind and an eternity before; and this little speck in the centre, however long, is but comparatively a minute. The difference between your tenure and mine is trifling, and I therefore tell you to be prepared. I am prepared. You all have a heavy responsibility, and it behooves you to prepare more than it does me.

## JOHN BROWN'S LAST SPEECH TO THE COURT (NOV. 2, 1859).

I have, may it please the Court, a few words to say.

In the first place, I deny everything but what I have all along admitted,—the design on my part to free the slaves. I intended certainly to have made a clean thing of that matter, as I did last winter, when I went into Missouri and there took slaves without the snapping of a gun on either side, moved them through the country, and finally left them in Canada. I designed to have done the same thing again, on a larger scale. That was all I intended. I never did intend murder, or treason, or the destruction of property, or to excite or incite slaves to rebellion, or to make insurrection.

I have another objection; and that is, it is unjust that I should suffer such a penalty. Had I interfered in the manner which I admit, and which I admit has been fairly proved (for I admire the truthfulness and candor of the greater portion of the witnesses who have testified in this case),—had I so interfered in behalf of the rich, the powerful, the intelligent, the so-called great, or in behalf of any of their friends,—either father, mother, brother, sister, wife, or children, or any of that class,—and suffered and sacrificed what I have in this interference, it would have been all right; and every man in this court would have deemed it an act worthy of reward rather than punishment.

This court acknowledges, as I suppose, the validity of the law of God. I see a book kissed here which I suppose to be the Bible, or at least the New Testament. That teaches me that all things whatsoever I would that men should do to me, I should do even so to them. It teaches me, further, to “remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them.” I endeavored to act up to that instruction. I say, I am yet too young to understand that God is any respecter of persons. I believe that to have interfered as I have done—as I have always freely admitted I have done—in behalf of His despised poor, was not wrong, but right. Now, if it is deemed necessary that I should forfeit my life for the furtherance of the ends of justice, and mingle my blood further with the blood of my children and with the blood of millions in this slave country whose rights are disregarded by wicked, cruel, and unjust enactments,—I submit; so let it be done!

Let me say one word further.



I feel entirely satisfied with the treatment I have received on my trial. Considering all the circumstances, it has been more generous than I expected. But I feel no consciousness of guilt. I have stated from the first what was my intention, and what was not. I never had any design against the life of any person, nor any disposition to commit treason, or excite slaves to rebel, or make any general insurrection. I never encouraged any man to do so, but always discouraged any idea of that kind.

Let me say, also, a word in regard to the statements made by some of those connected with me. I hear it has been stated by some of them that I have induced them to join me. But the contrary is true. I do not say this to injure them, but as regretting their weakness. There is not one of them but joined me of his own accord, and the greater part of them at their own expense. A number of them I never saw, and never had a word of conversation with, till the day they came to me; and that was for the purpose I have stated.

Now I have done.

#### PRISON LETTERS.

##### *To his Family.*

CHARLESTOWN, JEFFERSON COUNTY, VA., Oct. 31, 1859.

*My dear Wife and Children, every one,*—I suppose you have learned before this by the newspapers that two weeks ago to-day we were fighting for our lives at Harper's Ferry; that during the fight Watson was mortally wounded, Oliver killed, William Thompson killed, and Dauphin slightly wounded; that on the following day I was taken prisoner, immediately after which I received several sabre-cuts on my head and bayonet-stabs in my body. As nearly as I can learn, Watson died of his wound on Wednesday, the second—or on Thursday, the third—day after I was taken. Dauphin was killed when I was taken, and Anderson I suppose, also. I have since been tried, and found guilty of treason, etc., and of murder in the first degree. I have not yet received my sentence. No others of the company with whom you were acquainted were, so far as I can learn, either killed or taken. Under all these terrible calamities I feel quite cheerful in the assurance that God reigns and will overrule all for his glory

and the best possible good. I feel no consciousness of guilt in the matter, nor even mortification on account of my imprisonment and irons; and I feel perfectly sure that very soon no member of my family will feel any possible disposition to "blush on my account." Already dear friends at a distance, with kindest sympathy, are cheering me with the assurance that posterity, at least, will do me justice. I shall commend you all together, with my beloved but bereaved daughters-in-law, to their sympathies, which I do not doubt will soon reach you. I also commend you all to Him "whose mercy endureth forever,"—to the God of my fathers, "whose I am, and whom I serve." "He will never leave you nor forsake you," unless you forsake Him. Finally, my dearly beloved, be of good comfort. Be sure to remember and follow my advice, and my example, too, so far as it has been consistent with the holy religion of Jesus Christ,—in which I remain a most firm and humble believer. Never forget the poor, nor think anything you bestow on them to be lost to you, even though they may be black as Ebedmelech, the Ethiopian eunuch, who cared for Jeremiah in the pit of the dungeon; or as black as the one to whom Philip preached Christ. Be sure to entertain strangers, for thereby some have — "Remember them that are in bonds as bound with them."

I am in charge of a jailer like the one who took charge of Paul and Silas; and you may rest assured that both kind hearts and kind faces are more or less about me, while thousands are thirsting for my blood. "These light afflictions, which are but for a moment, shall work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." I hope to be able to write you again. Copy this, Ruth, and send it to your sorrow-stricken brothers to comfort them. Write me a few words in regard to the welfare of all. God Almighty bless you all, and make you "joyful in the midst of all your tribulations!" Write to John Brown, Charlestown, Jefferson County, Va., care of Captain John Avis.

Your affectionate husband and father,

JOHN BROWN.

P.S.—Yesterday, November 2, I was sentenced to be hanged on December 2 next. Do not grieve on my account. I am still quite cheerful. God bless you!

Yours ever,

JOHN BROWN.

To Mrs. Child

MRS. L. MARIA CHILD.

OCTOBER 31.

*My dear Friend*,—such you prove to be, though a stranger, —Your most kind letter has reached me, with the kind offer to come here and take care of me. Allow me to express my gratitude for your great sympathy, and at the same time to propose to you a different course, together with my reasons for wishing it. I should certainly be greatly pleased to become personally acquainted with one so gifted and so kind; but I cannot avoid seeing some objections to it under present circumstances. First, I am in charge of a most humane gentleman, who with his family have rendered me every possible attention I have desired or that could be of the least advantage; and I am so far recovered from my wounds as no longer to require nursing. Then, again, it would subject you to great personal inconvenience and heavy expense, without doing me any good. Allow me to name to you another channel through which you may reach me with your sympathies much more effectually. I have at home a wife and three young daughters, the youngest but little over five years old, the oldest nearly sixteen. I have also two daughters-in-law, whose husbands have both fallen near me here. There is also another widow, Mrs. Thompson, whose husband fell here. Whether she is a mother or not I cannot say. All these, my wife included, live at North Elba, Essex County, N.Y. I have a middle-aged son, who has been in some degree a cripple from his childhood, who would have as much as he could well do to earn a living. He was a most dreadful sufferer in Kansas, and lost all he had laid up. He has not enough to clothe himself for the winter comfortably. I have no living son or son-in-law who did not suffer terribly in Kansas.

Now, dear friend, would you not as soon contribute fifty cents now, and a like sum yearly, for the relief of those very poor and deeply afflicted persons, to enable them to supply themselves and their children with bread and very plain clothing, and to enable the children to receive a common English education? Will you also devote your own energies to induce others to join you in giving a like amount, to constitute a little fund for the purpose named?

I cannot see how your coming here can do me the least good; and I am quite certain you can do me immense good

where you are. I am quite cheerful under all my afflicting circumstances and prospects, having, as I humbly trust, "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding," to rule in my heart. You may make such use of this as you see fit. God Almighty bless and reward you a thousand-fold!

Yours in sincerity and truth,

JOHN BROWN.

*To his Family.*

CHARLESTOWN, JEFFERSON COUNTY, VA., Nov. 8, 1859.

*Dear Wife and Children, every one,*—I will begin by saying that I have in some degree recovered from my wounds, but that I am quite weak in my back and sore about my left kidney. My appetite has been quite good for most of the time since I was hurt. I am supplied with almost everything I could desire to make me comfortable, and the little I do lack (some articles of clothing which I lost) I may perhaps soon get again. I am, besides, quite cheerful, having (as I trust) "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding," to "rule in my heart," and the testimony (in some degree) of a good conscience that I have not lived altogether in vain. I can trust God with both the time and the manner of my death, believing, as I now do, that for me at this time to seal my testimony for God and humanity with my blood will do vastly more toward advancing the cause I have earnestly endeavored to promote, than all I have done in my life before. I beg of you all meekly and quietly to submit to this, not feeling yourselves in the least *degraded* on that account. Remember, dear wife and children all, that Jesus of Nazareth suffered a most excruciating death on the cross as a felon, under the most aggravating circumstances. Think also of the prophets and apostles and Christians of former days, who went through greater tribulations than you or I, and try to be reconciled. May God Almighty comfort all your hearts, and soon wipe away all tears from your eyes! To him be endless praise! Think, too, of the crushed millions who "have no comforter." I charge you all never in your trials to forget the griefs "of the poor that cry, and of those that have none to help them."

I wrote most earnestly to my dear and afflicted wife not to come on for the present, at any rate. I will now give her my reasons for doing so. First, it would use up all the scanty

means she has, or is at all likely to have, to make herself and children comfortable hereafter. For let me tell you that the sympathy that is now aroused in your behalf may not always follow you. There is but little more of the romantic about helping poor widows and their children than there is about trying to relieve poor "niggers." Again, the little comfort it might afford us to meet again would be dearly bought by the pains of a final separation. We must part; and I feel assured for us to meet under such dreadful circumstances would only add to our distress. If she comes on here, she must be only a gazing-stock throughout the whole journey, to be remarked upon in every look, word, and action, and by all sorts of creatures, and by all sorts of papers, throughout the whole country. Again, it is my most decided judgment that in quietly and submissively staying at home vastly more of generous sympathy will reach her, without such dreadful sacrifice of feeling as she must put up with if she comes on. The visits of one or two female friends that have come on here have produced great excitement, which is very annoying; and they cannot possibly do me any good. Oh, Mary! do not come, but patiently wait for the meeting of those who love God and their fellow-men, where no separation must follow. "They shall go no more out forever." I greatly long to hear from some one of you, and to learn anything that in any way affects your welfare. I sent you ten dollars the other day; did you get it? I have also endeavored to stir up Christian friends to visit and write to you in your deep affliction. I have no doubt that some of them, at least, will heed the call. Write to me, care of Captain John Avis, Charlestown, Jefferson County, Virginia.

"Finally, my beloved, be of good comfort." May all your names be "written in the Lamb's book of life!"—may you all have the purifying and sustaining influence of the Christian religion!—is the earnest prayer of

Your affectionate husband and father,

JOHN BROWN.

NOVEMBER 9.

P.S.—I cannot remember a night so dark as to have hindered the coming day, nor a storm so furious or dreadful as to prevent the return of warm sunshine and a cloudless sky. But, beloved ones, do remember that this is not your rest,—that in

this world you have no abiding place or continuing city. To God and his infinite mercy I always commend you.

J. B.

*From a Letter to his Wife, Nov. 16, 1859.*

Now let me say a word about the effort to educate our daughters. I am no longer able to provide means to help towards that object, and it therefore becomes me not to dictate in the matter. I shall gratefully submit the direction of the whole thing to those whose generosity may lead them to undertake in their behalf, while I give anew a little expression of my own choice respecting it. You, my wife, perfectly well know that I have always expressed a decided preference for a very plain but perfectly practical education for both sons and daughters. I do not mean an education so very miserable as that you and I received in early life; nor as some of our children enjoyed.

When I say plain but practical, I mean enough of the learning of the schools to enable them to transact the common business of life comfortably and respectably, together with that thorough training to good business habits which best prepares both men and women to be useful though poor, and to meet the stern realities of life with a good grace. You well know that I always claimed that the music of the broom, wash-tub, needle, spindle, loom, axe, scythe, hoe, flail, etc., should first be learned at all events, and that of the piano, etc., afterwards. I put them in that order as most conducive to health of body and mind; and for the obvious reason, that after a life of some experience and of much observation, I have found ten women as well as ten men who have made their mark in life right, whose early training was of that plain, practical kind, to one who had a more popular and fashionable early training. But enough of that.

*To the Rev. — McFarland.*

JAIL, CHARLESTOWN, Wednesday, Nov. 23, 1859.

THE REV. — MCFARLAND.

*Dear Friend,*—Although you write to me as a stranger, the spirit you show towards me and the cause for which I am in bonds makes me feel towards you as a dear friend. I would be glad to have you or any of my liberty-loving ministerial

friends here, to talk and pray with me. I am not a stranger to the way of salvation by Christ. From my youth I have studied much on that subject, and at one time hoped to be a minister myself; but God had another work for me to do. To me it is given, in behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake. But while I trust that I have some experimental and saving knowledge of religion, it would be a great pleasure to me to have some one better qualified than myself to lead my mind in prayer and meditation, now that my time is so near a close. You may wonder, are there no ministers of the gospel here? I answer, no. There are no ministers of Christ here. These ministers who profess to be Christian, and hold slaves or advocate slavery, I cannot abide them. My knees will not bend in prayer with them, while their hands are stained with the blood of souls. The subject you mention as having been preaching on the day before you wrote to me is one which I have often thought of since my imprisonment. I think I feel as happy as Paul did when he lay in prison. He knew if they killed him, it would greatly advance the cause of Christ; that was the reason he rejoiced so. On that same ground "I do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice." Let them hang me; I forgive them, and may God forgive them, for they know not what they do. I have no regret for the transaction for which I am condemned. I went against the laws of men, it is true, but "whether it be right to obey God or men, judge ye." Christ told me to remember them that were in bonds as bound with them, to do towards them as I would wish them to do towards me in similar circumstances. My conscience bade me do that. I tried to do it, but failed. Therefore I have no regret on that score. I have no sorrow either as to the result, only for my poor wife and children. They have suffered much, and it is hard to leave them uncared for. But God will be a husband to the widow and a father to the fatherless.

I have frequently been in Wooster, and if any of my old friends from about Akron are there, you can show them this letter. I have but a few more days, and I feel anxious to be away "where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest." Farewell.

Your friend, and the friend of all friends of liberty,

JOHN BROWN.

*To Hon. D. R. Tilden.*

CHARLESTOWN, JEFFERSON COUNTY, VA.,  
Monday, Nov. 28, 1859.

HON. D. R. TILDEN.

*My dear Sir,*—Your most kind and comforting letter of the 23d inst. is received. I have no language to express the feelings of gratitude and obligation I am under for your kind interest in my behalf ever since my disaster. The great bulk of mankind estimate each other's actions and motives by the measure of success or otherwise that attends them through life. By that rule, I have been one of the worst and one of the best of men. I do not claim to have been one of the latter, and I leave it to an impartial tribunal to decide whether the world has been the worse or the better for my living and dying in it. My present great anxiety is to get as near readiness for a different field of action as I well can, since being in a good measure relieved from the fear that my poor broken-hearted wife and children would come to immediate want. May God reward a thousand-fold all the kind efforts made in their behalf! I have enjoyed remarkable cheerfulness and composure of mind ever since my confinement; and it is a great comfort to feel assured that I am permitted to die for a cause, —not merely to pay the debt of nature, as all must. I feel myself to be most unworthy of so great distinction. The particular manner of dying assigned to me gives me but very little uneasiness. I wish I had the time and the ability to give you, my dear friend, some little idea of what is daily, and I might almost say hourly, passing within my prison walls; and could my friends but witness only a few of these scenes, just as they occur, I think they would feel very well reconciled to my being here, just what I am, and just as I am. My whole life before had not afforded me one half the opportunity to plead for the right. In this, also, I find much to reconcile me to both my present condition and my immediate prospect. I may be very insane; and I am so, if insane at all. But if that be so, insanity is like a very pleasant dream to me. I am not in the least degree conscious of my ravings, of my fears, or of any terrible visions whatever; but fancy myself entirely composed, and that my sleep, in particular, is as sweet as that of a healthy, joyous little infant. I pray God that he will grant me a continuance of the same calm but delightful dream, until I come to know of those realities which eyes have not seen and



which ears have not heard. I have scarce realized that I am in prison or in irons at all. I certainly think I was never more cheerful in my life. . . .

Your friend in truth,

JOHN BROWN.

*To Mrs. George L. Stearns.*

CHARLESTOWN, JEFFERSON COUNTY, VA., Nov. 29, 1859.

MRS. GEORGE L. STEARNS, Boston, Mass.

*My dear Friend,*—No letter I have received since my imprisonment here has given me more satisfaction or comfort than yours of the 8th instant. I am quite cheerful, and was never more happy. Have only time to write a word. May God forever reward you and all yours! My love to all who love their neighbors. I have asked to be spared from having any weak or hypocritical prayers made over me when I am publicly murdered, and that my only religious attendants be poor little dirty, ragged, bareheaded and barefooted slave boys and girls, led by some old gray-headed slave mother.

Farewell! Farewell!

Your friend,

JOHN BROWN.

*John Brown's Last Letter to his Family.*

CHARLESTOWN PRISON, JEFFERSON COUNTY, VA.,

Nov. 30, 1859.

*My dearly beloved Wife, Sons, and Daughters, every one,*—As I now begin probably what is the last letter I shall ever write to any of you, I conclude to write to all at the same time. I will mention some little matters particularly applicable to little property concerns in another place.

I recently received a letter from my wife, from near Philadelphia, dated November 22, by which it would seem that she was about giving up the idea of seeing me again. I had written her to come on if she felt equal to the undertaking, but I do not know that she will get my letter in time. It was on her own account, chiefly, that I asked her to stay back. At first I had a most strong desire to see her again, but there appeared to be very serious objections; and should we never meet in this life, I trust that she will in the end be satisfied it was for the best at least, if not most for her comfort.

I am waiting the hour of my public murder with great composure of mind and cheerfulness; feeling the strong assurance that in no other possible way could I be used to so much advantage to the cause of God and of humanity, and that nothing that either I or all my family have sacrificed or suffered will be lost. The reflection that a wise and merciful as well as just and holy God rules not only the affairs of this world, but of all worlds, is a rock to set our feet upon under all circumstances,—even those more severely trying ones in which our own feelings and wrongs have placed us. I have now no doubt but that our seeming disaster will ultimately result in the most glorious success. So, my dear shattered and broken family, be of good cheer, and believe and trust in God with all your heart and with all your soul; for he doeth all things well. Do not feel ashamed on my account, nor for one moment despair of the cause or grow weary of well-doing. I bless God I never felt stronger confidence in the certain and near approach of a bright morning and glorious day than I have felt, and do now feel, since my confinement here. I am endeavoring to return, like a poor prodigal, as I am, to my Father, against whom I have always sinned, in the hope that he may kindly and forgivingly meet me, though a very great way off.

Oh, my dear wife and children, would to God you could know how I have been travailing in birth for you all, that no one of you may fail of the grace of God through Jesus Christ; that no one of you may be blind to the truth and glorious light of his Word, in which life and immortality are brought to light. I beseech you, every one, to make the Bible your daily and nightly study, with a child-like, honest, candid, teachable spirit of love and respect for your husband and father. And I beseech the God of my fathers to open all your eyes to the discovery of the truth. You cannot imagine how much you may soon need the consolations of the Christian religion. Circumstances like my own for more than a month past have convinced me, beyond all doubt, of my own great need of some theories treasured up, when our prejudices are excited, our vanity worked up to the highest pitch. Oh, do not trust your eternal all upon the boisterous ocean, without even a helm or compass to aid you in steering! I do not ask of you to throw away your reason; I only ask you to make a candid, sober use of your reason.

My dear young children, will you listen to this last poor admonition of one who can only love you? Oh, be determined at once to give your whole heart to God, and let nothing shake or alter that resolution. You need have no fears of regretting it. Do not be vain and thoughtless, but sober-minded; and let me entreat you all to love the whole remnant of our once great family. Try and build up again your broken walls, and to make the utmost of every stone that is left. Nothing can so tend to make life a blessing as the consciousness that your life and example bless and leave others stronger. Still, it is ground of the utmost comfort to my mind to know that so many of you as have had the opportunity have given some proof of your fidelity to the great family of men. Be faithful unto death: from the exercise of habitual love to man it cannot be very hard to love his Maker.

I must yet insert the reason for my firm belief in the divine inspiration of the Bible, notwithstanding I am, perhaps, naturally sceptical,—certainly not credulous. I wish all to consider it most thoroughly when you read that blessed book, and see whether you cannot discover such evidence yourselves. It is the purity of heart, filling our minds as well as work and actions, which is everywhere insisted on, that distinguishes it from all the other teachings, that commends it to my conscience. Whether my heart be willing and obedient or not, the inducement that it holds out is another reason of my conviction of its truth and genuineness; but I do not here omit this, my last argument on the Bible, that eternal life is what my soul is panting after this moment. I mention this as a reason for endeavoring to leave a valuable copy of the Bible, to be carefully preserved in remembrance of me, to so many of my posterity, instead of some other book at equal cost.

I beseech you all to live in habitual contentment with moderate circumstances and gains of worldly store, and earnestly to teach this to your children and children's children after you, by example as well as precept. Be determined to know by experience, as soon as may be, whether Bible instruction is of divine origin or not. Be sure to owe no man anything, but to love one another. John Rogers wrote to his children, "Abhor that arrant whore of Rome." John Brown writes to his children to abhor, with undying hatred also, that sum of all villainies,—slavery. Remember, "he that is slow to anger is better than the mighty," and "he that ruleth his

spirit than he that taketh a city." Remember also that "they being wise shall shine, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever."

And now, dearly beloved family, to God and the work of his grace I commend you all.

Your affectionate husband and father,

JOHN BROWN.

*The Last Paper written by John Brown, handed to One of the Guards on the Morning of his Execution.*

CHARLESTOWN, VA., Dec. 2, 1859.

I, John Brown, am now quite *certain* that the crimes of this *guilty land* will never be purged away but with *blood*. I had, as I now think vainly, flattered myself that without very much bloodshed it might be done.

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"The Life and Letters of John Brown" by Frank B. Sanborn is the completest and best biography and, written as it was by one so intimate with his work and purposes, is likely to remain the final, authoritative word. There are less critical works by Redpath and Webb; and Von Holst's noble essay has been translated and published in a separate volume, with valuable introduction and notes by Mr. Frank L. Stearns. "Echoes of Harper's Ferry" is a collection, edited by Redpath in 1860, of the notable tributes to John Brown by Wendell Phillips, Emerson, Thoreau, Theodore Parker, Victor Hugo and many others.